

FAT THINGS, FULL OF MARROW NO. 1306

**A SERMON
DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, JULY 23, 1876,
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AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

"For a small moment have I forsaken you, but with great mercies will I gather you. In a little wrath I hid my face from you for a moment; but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on you, says the LORD your Redeemer. For this is as the waters of Noah unto me: for as I have sworn that the waters of Noah should no more go over the earth, so have I sworn that I would not be wroth with you, nor rebuke you. For the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed; but my kindness shall not depart from you, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed, says the LORD that has mercy on you."

Isaiah 54:7-10.

THIS precious passage is the property of all true believers in the Lord Jesus Christ. We might not have ventured to say this if it were not for the last verse of the chapter, which assures us that it is so. "This is the heritage of the servants of the LORD, and their righteousness is of me, says the LORD." The matchless promises and assurances of this chapter do not belong to the Jewish church alone, nor only to the Gentile church, nor even exclusively to the whole church considered as a community, but they are the property of all who are sons and servants of the living God. Isaiah speaks of both sonship and service. "This is the heritage," or portion obtained by heirship, which implies sonship. The promise, then, is ours, if we have been born into the family of grace.

But then all God's sons are also servants, even as the firstborn among many brethren became a servant of servants for our sakes. Judge yourselves, dear friends, as to whether you are sons of God by birth and servants of God by choice, for if you be, then you may take these promises to yourselves.

In the last clause it is written, "Their righteousness is of me, says the LORD." In this we can claim our part, for we have no righteousness of our own, but it has pleased the Lord to work a righteousness *for* us, and a righteousness *in* us, since we stood in great need of both of these, neither could we by any means have procured them for ourselves. If the Lord Jesus had not been made unto us both our justification and our sanctification, we could have had no hope of seeing the face of God with acceptance.

If we are sons by regeneration, and servants by the renewal of our nature, and if our righteousness both imputed and imparted is found in God alone, then the text is ours most richly to enjoy. Stand not back from a table so richly spread, but eat and drink abundantly of its dainty provisions. If this be our heritage, the Lord says to us as He did to Abraham, "Lift up now your eyes, and look from the place where you are northward, and southward, and eastward, and westward: for all the land which you see, to you will I give it."

Before going further I would call your attention to the position of the wonderful chapter now before us. It may seem to be a commonplace remark, but its position is remarkable as following the fifty-third of Isaiah—that clearest of all prophecies concerning our Lord. The fifty-third of Isaiah is the lay of the great minstrel prophet concerning the sufferings of the despised and rejected of men, and it is followed by this golden chapter. By the way of the atonement we come to enjoy covenant blessings. Fresh from the woes of Calvary we are able to bear our own griefs without repining, and with the great ransom in full view we are convinced of our security before the Lord.

You will never have faith enough to comprehend the extent of the heritage prepared of the Lord for you, except as your eyes are strengthened by gazing upon Him whom it pleased the Father to bruise for

us. When we have the fullest sense of the sufferings of Jesus and of the love which brought Him to bear the iniquities of His people, we are then in the fittest state to comprehend the wonders of covenant grace, and to appreciate the priceless mercies which come to us by the way of His substitutionary sacrifice. Carrying in your hearts such words as these, "Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; he was wounded for our transgressions, and he was bruised for our iniquities," let us draw near to the treasures which are spread before us. May the Holy Ghost assist us.

The people of God are often very severely afflicted. They are tried in providence, and they are vexed by the wicked among whom they dwell, and at times it seems as if their lot were far less desirable than that of the ungodly. The best of saints have been tempted to envy the worst of sinners when they have seen them in great power, spreading themselves as a green bay tree, while they, themselves, have been as withered plants. The saints are chastened and the sinners are enriched, this is no small test of faith.

What is worse, at times the children of God are the subjects of great spiritual griefs, and derive no comfort from their religion. They judge themselves to be deserted by their God, and they inquire within themselves, "Is his mercy clean gone forever? Will He be favorable no more?" Then the joy of their heart ceases, and their music is turned into mourning. At such times there is powerful comfort for the child of God in the fact that, whatever the Lord may do with him, He cannot be wroth with him, nor rebuke him in the weightiest sense of those words.

Since Jesus has made complete atonement on our behalf there may be much that is bitter in our cup, but there cannot be in it even a single drop of *judicial punishment for sin*, because Christ has borne all that justice could inflict. It would be inconsistent with the integrity of the Most High first to execute vengeance upon the surety, and then to call His people to account for the sin which that surety has put away. There is not therefore in all the chastisements which God lays upon us so much as a single trace of punitive wrath—

*"Death and the curse were in our cup;
O Christ, 'twas full for Thee!
But Thou hast drained the last dark drop,
'Tis empty now for me:
That bitter cup, love drank it up,
Now blessing's left for me."*

The punishment for sin has been executed once for all upon Jesus Christ our Savior, and now if ever there be wrath on God's part towards His people it is of quite another kind from that with which He visits the unbelieving world. Towards the ungodly He is a Judge, and He summons them to judgment, and executes His righteous sentences upon them, but we who are in Christ have virtually died in Him, and upon us justice has executed its sentence in the person of our great Substitute, and therefore the law cannot make any further demands upon us. We are henceforth the children of God, and have come under another discipline altogether, the discipline of a loving father towards his family. The Lord may be angry with us as a father is angry with his child, but never as a judge is wroth with a criminal. In that respect His anger is forever turned away from the redeemed.

Our subject is to be *God's little wrath* and *God's great wrath*, the little wrath may light upon the Lord's beloved, for He says, "In a little wrath I hid my face from you for a moment," but there is a great wrath which burns as a consuming fire, and this cannot fall upon the redeemed, for the Lord has sworn that He will not be wroth with them nor rebuke them.

I. The first subject, then, is what the Lord calls His, "LITTLE WRATH."

Let us speak of it and its modifications and perhaps the Holy Spirit will bless our meditation to the comfort of His afflicted.

Our first remark shall be that *our view of that wrath and God's view of it may very greatly differ*. To a child of God in a right state even the most modified form of divine anger is very painful. A loving child dreads the smallest displeasure on his father's part. He may be right well assured that his parent will not kill him, or disown him, or deliver him over to the magistrate to be put in prison, but it is sorrow

enough for him that his father's heart is grieved. The terrors of a slave are not needed to keep the children of God in order, the filial fear which trembles at a father's frown is quite sufficient, let God but hide His face and we are troubled. We do not, therefore, despise the chastening of the Lord, or think little of His fatherly anger, on the contrary, we are weary with crying, our eyes fail while we wait for our God. Our entreaty is, "Hide not your face from your servant; for I am in trouble: hear me speedily." It breaks our hearts to think that we should grieve our God. This pain of heart is a very proper feeling, but it may be perverted by unbelief into the occasion of sin. We may conclude from the chastening rod that the Lord is about to destroy us though He has plainly said, "Fury is not in me."

We may falsely conclude, as the text seems to hint, that God has utterly forsaken us, and hidden His face forever. When we prayed we enjoyed no liberty and felt no access to the mercy seat, when we tried to sing, our hosannas fell flat from our tongues, when we went to the assembly of the saints, we no longer beheld the glory of the Lord as we had aforetime seen Him in His sanctuary, when we opened the Bible its choicest promises appeared to be as dry bones from which the marrow is taken, therefore we concluded that all was over with us, that God had forsaken us, and we therefore feared that nothing remained for us but eternal destruction—

*"If sometimes I strive, as I mourn,
My hold of Thy promise to keep,
The billows more fiercely return,
And plunge me again in the deep:
While harass'd and cast from Thy sight,
The tempter suggests with a roar,
'The Lord has forsaken thee quite:
Thy God will be gracious no more.'"*

This dark estimate of our affairs is not God's view of them. He knows that He has not utterly or finally withdrawn, but He puts it thus, "For a small moment have I forsaken you." It is but a partial departure under which the saint is suffering, the small moment will soon be over.

The tried one is enduring only a partial and transient withdrawal of the light of His countenance, for the Lord says, "In a little wrath I hid my face from you for a moment." I suppose if we were quite new in this world, and had never seen the sun descend below the horizon, we should conclude at his setting that we were about to be plunged into everlasting night. We have now become so accustomed to see him set and rise again, that evening causes us no alarm. Well, child of God, I trust you will not for an instant lose the light of your Father's countenance, but if you should do so it will return again: He has not forsaken you altogether nor forever. Weeping shall have its night, but joy's bright morning will follow, for the Lord will not cast off forever, but though He cause grief, yet will He have compassion according to the multitude of His mercies.

When we are under the hiding of God's face, we cannot judge rightly, we are too agitated, too distressed, too distracted to see matters in their true light. At such times we are in fear where no fear is, and also magnify that which is legitimately a cause of anxiety. Unbelief is so natural to us, and the propensity to write bitter things against ourselves is so very common, that we are not to be trusted with the scales of judgment. Let us not be too positive that our conclusions are the truth, let us rather take God's estimate of His own dealings, and if we are at this time walking in darkness and seeing no light, let us trust in the Lord and stay ourselves upon His Word, for all that God has done towards us, if we are indeed His servants, amounts to this, that for a small moment He has forsaken us, and in a little wrath He has hidden His face from us.

I will now call your attention to two or three things which should greatly modify the view we take of the hidings of God's face. First, *as to time*, the time during which our God withdraws Himself is very short, "for a moment," He says, but He puts it less than that, "For a small moment." Do any of you know what a small moment is? Yet that is the Lord's own expression. Think of how long He has loved us,

even from before the foundation of the world! The time in which He hides His face is very short compared with that. Think of how long He will love us, when all this universe shall have subsided into its native nothingness He will love us forever! The time during which He chastens us is, compared with that, a very small moment. Think of how long we deserved to have been in hell, to lie forever beneath His indignation, the little moment in which His heavy hand is upon us is indeed as nothing compared with the eternal misery which our sins have merited.

Dear brethren, when you come forth from the hiding of His face into the light again, this gloom will seem to have been but a small moment, you shall forget the shame of your youth, you shall not remember the reproach of your widowhood anymore. Sorrows past are slight and short when followed by boundless, endless joys. An eternity of heaven makes even a lifetime of pain to shrivel into a small moment.

When you have noticed the time, then I would call your attention to *the recompense which is promised*. "For a small moment have I forsaken you, but with great mercies will I gather you." The Lord will make up to you all your losses, your afflictions, your crosses, and your chastisements. God's dealings with us never seem to be so merciful as after a time of trial. Then every blessing is a mercy indeed, and we adore the love which grants it to us. When the taste of the wormwood and the gall is still on the palate, then the wines on the lees well refined have a peculiar flavor, and we drink of them with a special zest. The bitterness makes the sweet the sweeter, and the sorrow makes the joy the more abounding.

The text does not say that God will give us mercy after He has for a while left us, but the word is in the plural, "mercies," multitudes of mercies. Nay, it does not merely say "mercies," but, "great mercies," for they are all the greater because we so greatly need them, are plunged in such great distress for want of them, and filled with so many great fears as to our future estate. With great mercies will the Lord come to us, silence our fears, and help us to gather up our scattered hopes and confidences. The Lord not only promises us these great favors, but He promises that He Himself will bring them. They are not to be sent to us by angels or by external providences, but He Himself declares, "With great mercies will I gather you."

The work of restoration shall be the Lord's own personal work, His own right hand shall be laid to it, and after downcastings and scatterings of many different sorts, the Lord Himself shall arise for the gathering of His people. "He that scattered Israel will gather him, and keep him as a shepherd does his flock." "Thus says the Lord, as one whom his mother comforts, so will I comfort you." The Lord Himself will devise means to bring back His banished ones, He will turn away His wrath from them, and they shall sing, "O LORD, I will praise you: though you were angry with me, your anger is turned away, and you comfort me."

It would be far better to walk with God in one long continued fellowship throughout life, but if fellowship be broken you may return, and return at once. It is a great thing to have your joy continued even under trouble, but if the trouble should be too much for you, and all God's waves and billows should roll over you, yet He will restore you, for He has said, "I will bring again from Bashan, I will bring my people again from the depths of the sea." You shall see how little His wrath was, for love's binding up shall make you forget the wounding, and the heavenly oil of consolation shall effectually remove the bruising.

Though the Lord may shut you up in the dark, yet afterwards He will give you light again, and the light will be all the brighter because of the darkness. When comforts are restored we see the reason for their withdrawal, and like good old Jacob when he found his long lost Joseph, we admire the love which afflicted us as much as the grace which restores our comforts. Bear you, then, with patience the little wrath of God, because of the shortness of its duration and the greatness of its recompense.

The text further declares that *the wrath is in itself little*. I should hardly have used such a term if I had not found it written here by an infallible pen. "In a little wrath I hid my face from you for a moment." God's wrath against His own people, as compared with that which burns against the ungodly

is but little, and it never can get beyond that point. If you read the context you will see that it must be little wrath, for first it is the wrath of a husband against his wife. "Your Maker is your husband." Yes, good Lord, You may be angry with me, but You are my husband still, You may forsake me for a while, but You have betrothed me unto Yourself forever in faithfulness and in mercy, and in Your Word it is written, "The Lord, the God of Israel, says He hates putting away."

Observe with delight that the Lord's wrath against His chosen is not the anger of a king against rebellious subjects, nor that of an enemy against his foe, but the tender jealousy, the affectionate grief of a loving husband when his bride has treated him ill. Note an instance of this in the book of Jeremiah, where even when He banishes His people, He shows His love at the same time and sighs, "I have given the dearly beloved of my soul into the hands of her enemies." Observe, also, that the wrath is that of a Redeemer against those He has redeemed. We read at the end of the eighth verse, "Says the LORD your Redeemer." It is such anger that nevertheless He died for us, such anger that still He puts forth His power to win what He has purchased, such anger that He values us far too well to lose us. Is not that a little anger which nevertheless calls to remembrance the blood with which it redeemed the offending one?

O Savior, Son of God, my Lord, my Life, my All, if I cannot see the smiles of Your face, I can still look to the wounds of Your hands, If I may not be ravished with Your love as it is shed abroad in my heart by the Holy Ghost, yet I know it as it was shed abroad from Your dear wounded side, when the spear rent Your heart! Here is consolation to those who are under a cloud, it is only in a little wrath that a Redeemer can hide Himself from the purchase of His agonies.

It is, moreover, the anger of One who pities us, for the passage at the end of the tenth verse runs thus, "Says the LORD, that has mercy on you," and in the Hebrew it is, "Says the LORD your Pitier." It is the wrath of One who is tender and compassionate, and pities while He smites. It is the anger of a father who takes the rod and scourges the child, but feels more of the smart than the child does, for every twig seems to lacerate his heart while he makes his child to cry and weep. It is such wrath as is consistent with love—"While I spoke against him I do earnestly remember him still." Our names are engraved on the very hand which buffets us, and the rod which bruises us is steeped in mercy.

I have not time to linger where there is so much to detain us, but we will notice next *that the expression of His little anger is not after all so extremely severe*, for what does it say? "I hid my face." The face of the Lord is against them that do evil, to cut off the remembrance of them from the earth, but our text does not say, "I turned my face against you," but only, "I hid my face from you." I grant that this is painful, but still there is this sweet reflection—why does He hide His face? It is because the sight of it would be pleasant to us. It is a face of love, for if it were a face of anger He would not need to hide it from His erring child. If it were an angry face and He wished to chasten us, He would unveil it, and, therefore, we may be sure that He covers it because it is so bright with everlasting love that if it could be seen no chastisement would be felt by us. See, then, that—

***"Behind a frowning providence
He hides a smiling face."***

His hidden love is true love, and it hides itself because it is so. Remember that we might have been plunged in outer darkness, and have felt the crushing blows of the iron rod, but as it is we are only put under His frown for a time, "He has not dealt with us after our sins, nor rewarded us according to our iniquities." Be it ours to humble ourselves under the mighty hand of God, but let us not despise the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when we are corrected by Him, for whom the Lord loves He chastens, and scourges every son whom He receives. Let us neither despair nor distrust our God, nor think that we are the objects of His great wrath when, indeed, we are only feeling His fatherly anger, which is only a form of His wise and deep love.

Observe, too, for we must not leave out a word here, that this little wrath *is perfectly consistent with everlasting love*. "In a little wrath I hid my face from you for a moment, but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on you." The Lord is filled with everlasting kindness at the very time when He is making the promise, for if you promise a person that you will love him you do love him already, love alone could prompt a promise such as that which I have read.

O you from whom God has hidden His face, when He promises that He will have mercy on you with everlasting kindness, is not love already ruling His heart? Our heavenly Father loves His child as much when He chastens as when He caresses it. The Lord's own people are as dear to Him in the furnace of affliction as on the mount of communion, they are just as precious in His sight when He slays them, and seems in His fierce anger to destroy their joys and wither their hopes, as when He lifts them to His own right hand. The Lord does not rise and fall in His love like the waves of the sea, but His firm affections stand fast like the great mountains, and are as stable as the everlasting hills.

You have no right to infer from the greatness of your griefs that God is ceasing to love you, or that He loves you less, on the contrary, I am persuaded that if all the griefs which are possible to men could be heaped upon one child of God, if all God's waves and billows went over him, if he were to descend into the deeps of affliction so low that the earth with her bars seemed to be about him forever, if not one ray of light came into his soul, but he was tormented with temptation, and afflicted by Satan, and deserted by man, and body and soul were alike in grief and pain, yet would all this only be a token of divine love to him and part of the process by which love would supremely bless him. The utmost that can be truthfully said on the dark side of a believer's worst estate is this, "In a little wrath I hid my face from you for a moment."

O children of God, you ought to be comforted by this, but I know you will not be unless the divine Comforter shall lay these heavenly truths home to your souls. I can but speak them in my own feeble manner, He can speak them with power. Our duty, then, under the Lord's little wrath is to feel it and grieve about it, and to search ourselves, and put away our sins, but we must not dishonor the Lord by unbelief, nor fancy ourselves to be under the covenant of works, or speak as if the atonement had failed and left us as much the heirs of wrath as before. We are not under the law, and cannot therefore be under the wrath which the law works. We are not accounted as guilty before the Lord, and therefore cannot be obnoxious to His great anger. Let us remember this and be of good courage when we are enduring the chastisements of the Lord.

II. We are now to consider THE GREAT WRATH OF GOD AND OUR SECURITY AGAINST IT.

Our security against it is this, "This is as the waters of Noah unto me: for as I have sworn that the waters of Noah should no more go over the earth; so have I sworn that I would not be angry with you, nor rebuke you." Until God drowns the whole world again, He never can let out His great wrath against His people. Many centuries have gone by since Noah was saved in the ark, and there has been no other universal flood. There have been partial floods here and there, but the earth has never been completely destroyed with water.

I should not wonder but what the first shower of rain that fell, after he came out of the ark frightened Noah, and if it had not been that he saw the bow of God in the cloud, he would have trembled lest once again the fair world would be buried in the deeps, but his fears were all in vain, generations have followed generations in perfect safety from a deluge, and I do not suppose that there is now a man existing who is afraid of a general flood.

Now, child of God, you must get rid, once for all, of all fear that God's great wrath can ever be let loose upon you, for it can never come upon the justified. Be sure of this, that as the waters of Noah shall no more go over the earth, so if you believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord will never be wroth with you nor rebuke you, so as to destroy you, or count you His enemy. His great wrath is over. The flood of old lasted six months and more, and during that time there was neither sowing nor reaping, but the Lord has said that never again shall a flood interrupt the operations of nature. "Seed time and harvest," said He, "summer and winter shall not cease," And they have not ceased. Go abroad now into the fields and

see how loaded they are with the fruits of the earth, which are ripening for the sickle. Note, then, that as God has not suffered the seasons to be suspended by another flood, though thousands of years have passed away, so certain is it that He will not spend your spiritual life, nor take from you the blessings of His covenant by letting out His wrath against you. He says He will not, and brother, it were something like blasphemy to indulge a doubt after this.

My text suggests to me that we have ample security that the great wrath of God will never break out against us, for *it has broken out against us once*. The waters of Noah did go over the earth once, but never twice. Now, the wrath of God can never break forth against His redeemed, because it has already broken forth against them. Do you not remember it? It was on that dark, that doleful night, when our great covenant Head and Representative was in the garden all alone, and then the flood began to rise and rage, and He said, "My soul is exceedingly sorrowful, even unto death." There was a sight in the garden that night such as none of us have ever seen—

*"Immanuel, sunk with dreadful woe,
Unfelt, unknown to all below—
Except the Son of God—
In agonizing pangs of soul,
Drinks deep of wormwood's bitterest bowl,
And sweats great drops of blood."*

The floods lifted up their voice, the cataracts of wrath descended, and the great deeps opened up from beneath to overwhelm His spirit. The waters came in even unto His soul. You know what happened to Him in Pilate's hall, and among the soldiers, how He hid not His face from shame and spitting while He bowed His back to the smiter's lash, and you remember well how they took Him to the cross and nailed Him there, your Lord and mine. "It pleased the Father to bruise him: he has put him to grief," he made his soul an offering for sin, and laid on him the iniquities of us all. The Father hid His face from Him, and refused to smile on the sinner's Substitute.

The tempest had come to its highest, the floods were out twenty cubits above the tops of the mountains when our Lord cried out, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" The flood was then at its height, even that flood of wrath which was due to us for sin. In the death of the Lord Jesus we died. We were crucified in Him, in Him we bore the punishment for sin. The Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all. Take it for a stable maxim, which can never be denied, that two judgments can never be meted out for the same offense, neither the laws of earth nor heaven will permit that the Substitute should bleed and then that the penalty should a second time be demanded. Where would be the value of the atonement if such could be the case?

Jesus has paid our debts, and therefore we are out of debt, He has taken the handwriting of ordinances which was against us, and nailed it to His cross, there is the receipt for all our debts, fastened up before heaven and hell upon the cross of Christ. "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifies. Who is he that condemns? It is Christ that died." Is not that answer enough for all the charges of hell?

Let us put together two or three texts and drink in their sweetness. "Once in the end of the world has he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself." Get hold of that. Sin is put away forever. "He came," another prophet tells us, "to finish transgression, and make an end of sin." Now, if He has made an end of sin, where is it? What reason can we have to fear its return? Think how David puts it, "As far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us." Does anybody know how far in the broad heavens the east is from the west? In the vastness of space no boundary can be imagined in either direction, and therefore the distance is inconceivable.

If the great enemy were to try and bring back our sins, it would take him an eternity to do it in, and meanwhile we shall be safe in heaven. What is said concerning the Lord in the book of Micah? "He will subdue our iniquities; and you will cast all their sins into the depths of the sea." Does anybody know

how deep the sea is? In some places it is said to be unfathomable. Can we find again that which is cast into the deeps? Our sins are cast by our Lord Jesus into deeps where no line will ever reach them. Glory be to His name for this.

Another text flashes upon my memory, “In those days, and in that time, says the LORD, the iniquity of Israel shall be sought for, and there shall be none; and the sins of Judah, and they shall not be found.” Take this again, “I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, your transgressions, and as a cloud your sins.” The texts which speak to this effect are many, time would fail us to mention them all, but their sum and substance is that Jesus Christ our great covenant surety was made a curse for us, and has thereby redeemed us from the curse of the law. You see, then, my drift. The floods of great wrath have been out, they have rolled over the dear Redeemer’s sacred person and spent their fury—

*“The tempest’s awful voice was heard;
O Christ, it broke on Thee!
Thy open bosom was my ward,
It braved the storm for me.
Thy form was scarred, Thy visage marred;
Now cloudless peace for me.”*

It is absolutely certain that there never shall be a second flood either of water to drown the world, or of divine wrath to overwhelm the souls of the redeemed. What joy is this? But this is not all.

Note that *the text gives us next the oath of God as our security*. “As I have sworn that the waters of Noah should no more go over the earth, so have I sworn that I would not be wroth with you, nor rebuke you.” It is always a solemn occasion when JEHOVAH lifts His hand to heaven and swears. Then is a matter confirmed indeed when it is secured by the oath of God. To my mind nothing is more full of awe, I cannot grasp the thought to the full, and yet I love to dwell upon it. He swears by Himself because He could swear by no greater, and thus adding His oath to His promise He gives us two immutable things wherein it is impossible for God to lie.

He has pledged Himself, saying, “Their sins and iniquities will I remember no more.” The sin which was buried in Christ’s tomb shall never rise again, or be mentioned against us anymore forever, the iniquity which was borne by Christ shall never be laid to the charge of those for whom the Savior bore it. How could it be? So long as truth and holiness remain, how can it be imagined that atonement can be accepted and yet the sinner punished on his own account. If God can break His oath, may this thing be, but this is inconceivable, and so we rest secure.

But next we have before us the fact that *the Lord has guaranteed our security by a covenant*, for in the tenth verse He says, “Neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed.” The passage should be read, “Neither shall my covenant of peace be removed.” The eternal Father has entered into covenant with Christ that He would give to Him a seed for whom He should be the Covenant Head and Surety. Christ has fulfilled His side of the covenant by bearing all the penalty for His people’s sin, and fulfilling all righteousness, and now that covenant stands fast to be assuredly executed on the Father’s side.

Thus runs the covenant, “A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh.” “I will make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not turn away from them, to do them good; but I will put my fear in their hearts, and they shall not depart from me.” God has said, “I will dwell in them and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.” This is the covenant from which the Lord cannot and will not draw back, for He never alters the thing which has gone forth out of His mouth. This covenant was signed and sealed and ratified by the blood of Christ, and it is in all things well ordered and sure, and therefore the people of God may rest in perfect security of their everlasting deliverance from the deluge of righteous wrath.

And now, to close, *what blessed illustrations of our security are added* in the further declaration of the Lord’s mind and will. The Lord looks on the mountains and the hills, and declares that these and all

things visible will pass away, for time's grandest birth shall perish when eternity resumes its sway. The mountains and the hills may represent the most stable of earthly hopes and confidences, but these all must fail us when most we need them. The Lord Himself assures us of this, and therefore does not at all guarantee to us any security in the things which are seen, nor any peace that can be drawn from the creature, our consolation lies elsewhere. "The mountains shall depart and the hills be removed, but my kindness shall not depart from you, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed, says JEHOVAH, the Pitier."

Melt, you mountains, and dissolve, you hills, perish, O earth, and flee away you heavens, but the Lord cannot forget His oath nor forsake His chosen. Should our dearest friends die, should we traverse many times the sorrowful path to the sepulcher, should those who survive become unkind, should our substance be swept away, and our honorable name be unjustly questioned, should we be driven by persecution into banishment, and should weakness and sickness cast us upon the bed of languishing, should consumption mark us for her own, or painful maladies come upon us as armed men, we should then see the mountains depart and the hills remove, but even then we would triumph in almighty love, for thus says the Lord, "My kindness shall not depart from you, neither shall my covenant of peace be removed."

The sick chamber shall be a palace, the sickness itself an angelic messenger, poverty shall make us rich, shame shall increase our honor, banishment shall bring us nearer home, and death itself shall enlarge the boundaries of life. Under no conceivable circumstances shall the covenant fail, the Lord who made it cannot change, Jesus who sealed it cannot die, the love which dictated it cannot cease, the power which executes it cannot decay, and the truth which guarantees it cannot be questioned. In the eternal provisions of that covenant of peace, which is sure to all the seed, we may rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory.

My brethren, do you believe this? If you do you ought to be as happy as the angels are. Our lot is supremely blessed. What a loving God we serve, and what great things has He spoken concerning us. The soul is filled with wonder that the Almighty God should in very deed enter into covenant engagements with the insects of a day who are crushed before the moth! Whatever may be our outward sorrows, yet when we consider these choice favors and enjoy them in our own souls we may count ourselves of all men the most happy. How can we be so cold, so dead as we are? Such favors are enough to make rocks and hills sing out. O my soul, arouse you, and henceforth and evermore pour forth loud hallelujahs unto the Lord.

As for you who have no portion in divine realities, what do you possess that is worth having? O you who are seeking the world, but are despising covenant mercies, it were better for you that you had never been born. "What shall it profit a man if he gains the whole world and lose his own soul?" Think upon this, and consider your ways. There is this encouragement for you, that all through our text the leading note is *mercy*. Look at the seventh verse, "With great *mercies* will I gather you." Look at the eighth verse, "Will I have *mercy* on you." The Word of God drips with mercy. Remember also that if any of us have obtained these covenant promises we were no better than you by nature, and we had no more meritorious right to them than you have, but God in infinite distinguishing grace was pleased to bring *us* into the enjoyment of these privileges, why should He not bring *you* also? If salvation were by merit, there would be no Gospel, but as it is of mercy, free mercy, rich mercy, here is good news for you.

Dear heart, if you would be forgiven, Christ is ready to forgive, if you would have peace with God, that peace is made. If you believe in the Lord Jesus Christ you shall be saved, even as they are who are this day rejoicing in His complete redemption. The Lord bring you this day to confess your sin humbly, to look up to Christ believably, and to find salvation through the blood of the Lamb. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—ISAIAH 54

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—245, 738

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